

February 21, 2017

Re: HB-07027 CSDE - ECS - Equitable funding in education.

Dear Chairwoman Walker, Chairwoman Osten, Chairman Formica, Ranking Member Ziobron and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Tiffany Moyer-Washington and I am a Hartford resident and Hartford teacher of 13 years. I am also a parent of 4 children. One is in a magnet school, one is in a neighborhood school, and 2 are entering the lottery for pre-k this year.

Throughout my career, I have worked at both neighborhood and magnet schools within Hartford. My experience in Hartford is telling. I've worked at two different schools that were literally one mile from each other - but worlds apart.

In one, I had to buy my own paper to use in the copy lounge and the other I had a smart board. In one, I had mice and inconsistent heating and the other had a rock-climbing wall. The year I transferred from the neighborhood school to the magnet, I was surprised when a familiar face stopped by my classroom. A student I had taught in the neighborhood school had also transferred to the magnet school. He and I could not believe the contrast. He was a great musician and now, at the magnet school, he was going to get to have music, orchestra, band, and chorus classes and clubs - almost limitless opportunities to demonstrate his talent and improve his skills. At the magnet, he'd be able to bring copies of the classroom book home, instead of relying on copied and stapled chapters made on teacher-purchased paper. Moving one mile down the street opened an entirely different world to him. Yet, his needs, as a student, were exactly the same. Imagine if he moved another mile outside the city limits.

School funding sets up a dichotomy between the haves and the have-nots. The magnets vs. the neighborhoods vs. the suburban schools. And in this system, we have winners and losers. Only this isn't a game, these are children.

Now as a parent, I have so much more at stake. It isn't just someone else's children, it's my children. And I always thought if your school wasn't good enough, safe enough, clean enough, inviting enough to send your own child to, no one's child should be sent to it. Yet, we have a system that consistently underfunds the schools with the highest need.

There is so much that needs to be done to change the inequity within this system but there are two concrete and attainable changes that can be made right now. One is a common chart of accounts that all schools would be required to adhere to allowing officials, teachers, and the community the ability to hold schools accountable for their spending. This would also allow districts to share best practices and work collaboratively to use funds effectively and efficiently. The second is eliminating the extraneous 11 funding formulas and reducing them to one that includes weights for SPED, ELL, and high-risk students in high poverty areas. Both of these solutions will turn CT into a leader in education, creating a system that emphasizes equity and necessity.

Our current system is not only broken, it is immoral. Equitable funding is the **ONLY** right thing to do.

Thank you,
Tiffany Moyer-Washington